

NYM CRINKLE'S LETTER

Important Events of the Theatrical Week in New York.

THE OPERA SEASON'S FAILURE.

Next Winter the Stockholders Will Run Things to Suit Themselves—Lillian and Attale—"Uncle Celestin's" Automatic Piano and Comedian—Mansfield's English Notions.

New York, Feb. 24.—There is a good deal of speculation as to the outcome of the opera season. Mr. Maurice Grau's public statement that Mr. Abbey is tired of opera and will not have anything to do with it next year, is coupled with a rather bitter complaint of the way the press has treated the management. Neither Mr. Abbey nor Mr. Grau would care a rap for what the press said if they had been successful.

It is now understood on the inside that the stockholders are going to run their own opera next season on a popular and economic basis—mixing caviare and mock turtle periodically; that is, alternating Wagner with Meyerbeer. In any case it will not be opera for the people, but for the stockholders. A great deal of injustice has been done the management by the press, or at least that part of it which is inimical to Italian opera. It has sneered at the artists unjustly and found fault with the orchestra, the conductor and the ensemble. But the fact remains that the season has covered a wider range of works than ever before, and covered them with a larger average of artistic success.

Opera at the best is a thankless undertaking for a manager. Those who want the exclusive and expensive luxury ought to pay for it, and that is what they will have to do next season.

Lillian Russell and "La Cigale" have withdrawn from the Garden theater for the road and simultaneously Miss Huntington and Miss Gerrish come to the front—one at the Union Square the other at the Casino.

The Casino affair proved to be a riotous vaudeville in which an approved monkey-shiner, Mr. Jefferson de Angelis, carried off all the honors with a pitchfork.

You can hardly imagine a popular entertainment at this house whose two attractions (aside from the ever regnant chorus) is an automatic piano and the exploits of the comedian in trying to carve a roast turkey. But that is what "Uncle Celestin" rests on. It must therefore be said that the Casino did not fill the gap left by Lillian Russell. It produced Lolo Fuller in a dance and Mabel Stephenson, who chirps like a bobolink, but everybody felt that the automatic piano was the main card.

It will be a very difficult thing to offer a substitute for Lillian Russell to the men about town. There are a score of women who can sing better, but there is nobody who has the same amount of good looks and good voice combined. Without doubt she carried "La Cigale" through all the weeks at the Garden theater on her white shoulders. Strangers at the hotels went to see Lillian Russell. They never asked what the entertainment was, and they were amply repaid by the sensuous contemplation of the beauty, cunningly arrayed in the most seductive and sumptuous robes.

These feminine pets have their clientele of admirers or worshippers, who are much more of a popular phenomenon than the pets themselves, for they simply select a goddess and they agree to swear by her and buy her flowers and expend an enormous amount of callow enthusiasm over her until a new star appears. Lillian Russell has had a following of that kind here for a long time. There is, I believe, a Lillian Russell club up town of young men who, having no other ideal, have selected this one as an inspiration and a trademark.

But now it seems that a younger and fresher woman in Miss Russell's company is attracting attention. This is Miss Attale Claire, who has the advantage of virginity, ethereal and a certain vernal ingenuousness. The college boys having taken an oath to love and decorate her and buy tickets to her benefit, we can understand that presently the managers will be reaching out for her. Some years ago there was a play put on at the leading up town theater which required two leading women, and the management had to secure in addition to its regular lead another and younger who made a great hit with the public.

The lady of the company then appealed to one of the New York clubs, and a powerful coterie went to the management and threatened to withdraw its patronage if the newcomer was not shelved. I am sorry to say that the manager succumbed.

It is now said by the Claire adherents that the recent presentation of diamonds to Lillian Russell was gotten up by the management, Miss Russell contributing the diamonds, and even the club boys acknowledge that chivalry is better expressed in flowers.

Mme. Emma Eames has appeared at the Metropolitan opera house as Margherita, in Gounod's "Faust." It is notable that this opera drew one of the largest assemblages of the season. Every box and every seat in the vast house was filled, which was very far from being the case on the nights of the much vaunted "Lohengrin." The interest of the story was attested by the close attention of the extraordinary audience, and there was a great deal of anxiety to see M. Edouard de Reszke as Mephisto. This artist had been somewhat extravagantly praised, but I was disappointed in his Mephistopheles, which had been done here in the past with a great deal more of the sardonic flavor that Gounod no less than Goethe put into it, and he fell far short of the devilish cynicism and sarcasm of the music in the serenade. Mme. Eames seemed to me to be a colorless Margherita. She certainly lacked emotion and power. Her voice is not extraordinary in compass or timbre. Her attack is bad and her intonation defective.

It is seldom that a Gretchen fails to win an audience in the jewel song or the "King of Thule," but Mme. Eames' effort passed without a hand.

Mr. Richard Mansfield has returned to the Garden theater bringing with him his "Don Juan." But the place that gave it birth did not know it. He has taken all the bones out of it and let the epidermis hang in the air. It is now a farce called "The Weather Vane."

Comment me to Mr. Mansfield for making a piece stay. If you don't like it as tragedy, he will give it to you as burlesque. He is going to do his whole repertoire, exclusive of "Richard III." If he would let some competent playwright make him a play he would, if well fitted, make a great deal more money than does Mr. Crane, for he is an actor of sterling ability, but as a man he is credited with being a crank. No one on our stage today can play a morbid and weird character role with half his particularity and graphicness. But he insists upon shaping all his own plays with an egotism that is stupendous.

Mr. Mansfield has an ambition, and it is a worthy one, to be the Henry Irving of America; that is to say, he desires to be the great producer of plays, with a wealthy patron and a select set of influential backers whose liberality will enable him to put up a Richard Mansfield theater. All this is within the range of possibility.

He has a large circle of wealthy admirers, who like his exclusiveness, his patrician airs, his aesthetic fads and his princely demeanor. No other actor has a keener artistic sense.

No one knows so much about old crotchery and old tapestry. No one gets prettier women about him, no one can write music more cleverly in the Handel and Haydn style; no one keeps himself so aloof from the Bohemian element. Some day you will see an American Burdett-Coutts tumbling the means into his hands to erect the Mansfield theater. And then Dick will make money in America and spend it in London. He does not love America with any ardor. I think he belongs to the new Stratford-on-Avon school that misses the Forest of Arden in the Central park and only advertises in the London Times, and would rather be in the Abbey when dead than reside on Murray Hill while living.

NYM CRINKLE.

An Actress with a Strange Career.

Margaret Mather is a theatrical star who has waxed and waned and waxed again. The story of her stage life is a curious one.



MARGARET MATHER.

Eight or nine years ago J. M. Hill, who was in his day the most energetic theatrical manager in America, lifted her from complete obscurity to instantaneous and complete success on the stage by means of some of the most clever advertising America ever saw. For several seasons Mather's name acted on the theater going public like magic, and she played to crowded houses everywhere. Then she deserted the man who had made her in a way that savored strongly of ingratitude. Almost instantly she dropped pretty nearly out of public sight. Last season little was heard of her. This season she is said to have been very successful.

A story has been told to the effect that not only did Manager Hill make her a successful actress, but that he educated her and initiated her into the usages of polite society. Whether this is true or not is questioned and doesn't matter. Her desertion of him was the beginning of a series of mishaps that culminated in his financial failure last summer; but he is now beginning to get on his feet again, and will doubtless be a bigger figure in theatrical next season than he ever was before.

London's Newest Opera.

"The Vicar of Bray" is an old opera, but it had been so extensively rewritten when it was revived in London a week or two ago



A SCENE FROM "THE VICAR OF BRAY," that it was practically a new production. Whether it will succeed or not is still an open question. One of the chief objections to it is that it mildly satirizes the Church of England. It will be sung in America before long.

Woman's Way.

It was two bold knights errant; they rode forth to take the air; They were seeking for adventures, anywhere and everywhere; One was aged and experienced, and one was young and brash;

The Experienced was prudent and the Inexperienced rash. And presently they came upon a couple un- aware;

A huge and hideous monster, who beat a lady fair.

He was great and grim and terrible, a bulbous, bloated brute, With hairy hands and nose that shamed the best of orangutans; He was knobbed and gnarled and twisted like a huge misshapen tree, And the young man's heart waxed furious to see what he did see.

For the brute he banged the lady till one trembled for her life; And when they asked him why, he said, "Oh, nothing—she's my wife."

The knight errant of Experience, he made a low polite; Said he: "A family affair? Excuse me, sir—good night! Excuse me if I cannot stay—I think I'll hurry on!"

"Shame!" cried the inexperienced knight; but the older knight was gone. So the young knight laid his lance in rest, and his youthful heart pressed; And he charged upon the monster and just touched his mighty nose;

And the monster reached out for him, and with one tremendous thrust He knocked the good knight off his horse and laid him in the dust;

And twenty minutes later that young knight slowly woke And lay a-counting up the bones and things that monster broke;

And as he wondered at the deed of brave knight errantry, He saw the lady sitting on that horrid monster's knee.

She laid her dainty fingers, as she sat in loving pose, On a scratch, all but invisible, upon the monster's nose;

Her tender, soothing accents had a sweet and silvery ring; "Did the nasty man scratch hubby's nose, so pitty itty sing?"

He was a nasty, wicked man to give her hubby pain; He saw the lady sitting on that horrid monster's knee.

Just let the sweetums kiss the place and make it well again!"

When the youthful knight went on his way he was exceeding sore; But he knew a great big spreading lot more than he did before.

—Puck.

Sun Shadows.

There never was success so nobly gained, Or victory so free from earthly dross, But, in the winning, some one had been pained And some one suffered loss.

There never was so wisely planned a fete, Or festal throng with hearts on pleasure bent, But some neglected one outside the gate Wept tears of discontent.

There never was a bridal morning, fair With Hope's blue skies and Love's unclouded sun For two fond hearts, that did not bring despair To some sad other one.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

Farwell.

Farwell, and yet again farwell, and yet Never farwell—if farwell mean to fare Alone and disquieted.

CAME TO THE FRONT.

TWO MEN MADE PROMINENT BY THE CHILIAN CONTROVERSY.

The Record of "Fighting Bob" Evans as a Naval Officer—His Gallantry and Devotion to the Service—Career of Minister Egan.

The late complication with Chili made two Americans, already conspicuous, very prominent, viz., Minister Patrick Egan and Commander Robley D. Evans. Both have had rather romantic careers. When the delegate representing the then new territory of Utah made his first appointment to the United States Naval academy, the event was important and the young cadet was Robley D. Evans. He left the academy in 1860 with the title of acting midshipman and entered at once upon active duty.

He gained an enviable reputation during the civil war, and is known among naval officers as "Fighting Bob." He is passionately devoted to his profession, and has repeatedly refused most tempting offers to leave the service and take position as chief engineer of various enterprises, a place for which he is eminently well qualified. A company of capitalists once requested him to name his terms for an engagement which might continue fifteen years as



ROBLEY D. EVANS.

they designed a great work. In a spirit of levity the naval hero replied, "Fifteen thousand dollars a year and a bonus of \$20,000 when the work is done." To his astonishment and embarrassment the directors promptly accepted, and he was obliged to explain that he had placed the figures absurdly high, as he considered, to end the matter, as nothing would tempt him to leave the navy.

He won his first honors on the old Powhatan, in the assault on Fort Fisher, where he led a company of marines and was wounded in the leg. He advanced rapidly in grade, and on the 12th of July, 1878, was made commander, a rank he still holds. As commander of the gunboat Yorktown, on the Chilean coast, he has acted with praiseworthy promptness, and when the crew of one of the Yorktown's boats was stoned by Chilean sailors in the harbor of Valparaiso he called the commander of the Chilean vessel to account, and declared that if any further indignities were offered he would protect his men by vigorous measures. His language and action were worthy of the old days of Decatur and Preble and Ingraham.

The position of Minister Egan is very much like that of Pierre Soule in 1853-5. Soule was a fugitive—in fact, an escaped convict from France, and minister of the United States in Spain during a revolutionary outbreak in which Frenchmen were deeply interested. Egan is only a quasi fugitive from Ireland, and is American minister in a country where British interests are great. The Pierce administration sustained Soule unflinchingly, but he resigned in 1855, having been dogged, as he alleged, by French spies, and stopped at the French frontier while on a diplomatic tour until orders came from Paris to allow him to proceed. Mr. Soule had been many years in the United States, had served a term in the United States senate and become American throughout, while Mr. Egan had ceased to be a British subject but a short time before he became American minister to Chili. Of course his position has been one of extraordinary difficulty.

Patrick Egan was born Aug. 31, 1841, at Ballymahon, County Longford, Ireland, and was noted at a very early age for shrewdness in trade and general business ability. At the age of fourteen he obtained a responsible place with a large



PATRICK EGAN.

millinery firm in Dublin, became a director soon after reaching the lawful age, and at a time when most men consider themselves fortunate with a good clerkship he was the responsible man of this concern and head of the largest bakery in Ireland. As soon as his age would permit he also became a Nationalist, was a leader in the movement at twenty-eight, and at thirty, to wit, in 1871, was the chief conductor of Isaac Butt in founding the Home Rule league. In short, he almost equaled Alexander Hamilton in political precocity and quite excelled him in managing his private affairs.

In 1879 he was unanimously chosen one of the three trustees of the Land League, and so became its treasurer. When the quarrels grew hot he was accused of misapplying the funds, and about the same time learned that the government designed to prosecute him. Accordingly he "located in Paris" till vindicated by the Land League, and then, after a hurried trip to Ireland, went to Holland and thence to the United States in 1883. His subsequent career is well known to Americans.

Has Suffered Severe Punishment.

A criminal who was recently sentenced by the recorder of Liverpool, England, to a short term at hard labor was found to have served nearly forty-one years of his life in prison for stealing articles, the aggregate value of which was perhaps less than twenty-five dollars. In 1848 he was "sent up" for fourteen years. He got back in 1862, stole half a crown, and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. When he was released, in 1872, he stole a hair braid. This cost him seven years. He stole a watch in 1881 and two shillings in 1886. For each of these exploits he served five years.

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